

COMMERCIALLY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN – SEATTLE AND KING COUNTY

HOW TO HELP

The following list (adopted from the U.S. Health and Human Services <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking>) provides tips for identifying and assisting victims of child prostitution:

Where might first responders encounter victims?

- Hospitals and clinics
- HIV/AIDS prevention and outreach
- Child welfare system
- Juvenile justice system
- Schools
- Criminal justice system
- Churches
- Housing shelters
- Ethnic and cultural community centers

What are some signs responders should look for?

- Chronic runaway
- Under 18 and not attending school, or has numerous school absences
- Under 18 and dating much older men who may appear abusive or controlling
- Multiple people living in one house
- Possesses false IDs and lies about age
- Has large amounts of cash, jewelry, or new clothes
- Has no cash, as the pimp/trafficker may hold all money brought in by victim
- Has recurrent sexually transmitted diseases and/or need for pregnancy tests
- Shows signs of physical assault including broken bones, black eyes, bruising, injury, etc.
- Shows signs of branding or tattooing of pimp/trafficker's name (often on the neck)
- Disappears for blocks of time
- Has inconsistent stories
- Has restricted or strict communication imposed by the pimp
- Dresses inappropriately in sexually revealing clothing
- Has hair and nails done frequently but has no explainable source of funding to pay for this
- Uses or abuses substances
- Exhibits signs of exhaustion, fear, anxiety, depression
- Shows increase in mental illness symptoms

- Exhibits extreme weight loss
- Possesses hotel room keys
- Lacks knowledge about a given community or whereabouts
- Pagers or cell phones not paid by parents or guardian
- Inability or fear to make eye contact

How to identify if someone is a commercially sexually exploited child

Asking the right questions may help you determine if someone is a commercially sexually exploited child/youth. Here are some questions that you may ask to find out:

- Is the youth free to leave the relationship/situation?
- Is the youth fearful that something bad will happen to him/her, or a family member, if he/she leaves the relationship/situation?
- Has the youth been threatened?
- Has the youth been physically, sexually, or psychologically abused?
- Where does the youth live?
- Does the youth receive money/payment for the service?
- For foreign victims: How did the youth arrive at this destination?
- For foreign victims: Does the youth have a passport/valid ID card and is he/she in possession of such documents?

It is important to talk to the potential victim in a safe and confidential environment. Let him/her know that the information shared with you will be kept confidential unless s/he gives you permission to share with others. If the victim is accompanied by someone who seems controlling, you should try to separate the victim from that person. Do not ask these questions in front of the controlling person. The accompanying person could be the pimp/trafficker, or someone working for them.

In the case of child victims, it is recommended that you enlist the help of a social services specialist who is skilled in interviewing youth abuse victims. If an interpreter is needed, be sure that the interpreter does not know the victim or the pimp/trafficker and does not otherwise have a conflict of interest.

What health issues are of concern for prostituted youth?

- Physical health problems associated with beatings and rapes (i.e. broken bones, need for wound care, sores on feet from walking in high heels)
- Reproductive health problems (i.e. pregnancies, HIV, STIs, fertility issues)
- Malnutrition
- Mental health problems, including PTSD and somatic complaints (headaches, chronic pain) resulting from the trauma

- Alcohol, drug use, and chemical addiction
- Extreme anxiety and fear
- Changed relationships with others, such as the inability to trust
- Self-destructive behaviors (i.e. suicide attempts)
- Changed feelings or beliefs about oneself (i.e. profound shame, guilt)
- Changed perception of the perpetrator (such as establishing a traumatic bond)
- Despair and hopelessness

What are the needs of prostituted youth?

- Treatment for major trauma, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder
- Individual and/or group mental health services
- Safety planning
- Medical treatment
- Linkage and referral to other social services
- Substance abuse treatment
- Education needs (i.e. basic education, vocational education, GED, English as a Second Language for foreign nationals)
- Housing (emergency, short-term, long-term)
- Legal services (defense attorney, immigration attorney if not a U.S. citizen)
- Translation and interpreter services (if English is a second language)
- Outreach to locate victims
- Re-unification services (for foreign nationals)
- Employment assistance (job training, job placement, career coaching)
- Assistance dealing with law enforcement
- Assistance dealing with and testifying against pimps/traffickers
- Services to develop healthy non-sexual relationships with adults and members of the opposite sex